CLAIMS

1.   A method comprising:

initializing a client device, wherein the client device has an associated identifier;

communicating the identifier associated with the client device to a configuration server that contains configuration information associated with the client device;

receiving the configuration information from the configuration server;

applying the configuration information to the client device; and

receiving video data from the configuration server.

2.   A method as recited in claim 1 further comprising communicating the received video data to a display device.

3.   A method as recited in claim 1 wherein the received data includes audio data.

4.   A method as recited in claim 1 further comprising:

receiving a request to perform a task from a user of the client device;

requesting additional configuration information associated with the task from the configuration server;

receiving the additional configuration information from the configuration server; and

applying the additional configuration information to the client device.

5. A method as recited in claim 1 wherein the identifier is a unique identifier.

6. A method as recited in claim 1 wherein the client device is a set top box.

7. A method as recited in claim 1 wherein the client device is a display device.

8. A method as recited in claim 1 wherein the configuration information includes parental control settings to be implemented by the client device.

9. A method as recited in claim 1 wherein the configuration information includes a last channel tuned by the client device.

10. A method as recited in claim 1 further comprising discarding the configuration information after applying the configuration information to the client device.

11. A method as recited in claim 1 further comprising:

receiving changes to the configuration information;

applying the received changes to the client device; and

communicating the received changes to the configuration server.

12. A method as recited in claim 1 further comprising applying the configuration information to a second client device.

13. A method as recited in claim 1 further comprising:

accessing the configuration server that contains configuration information associated with the client device; and

changing the configuration information associated with the client device.

14. A method as recited in claim 13 wherein the changes to the configuration information are applied to the client device during subsequent initializations of the client device.

15. One or more computer-readable memories containing a computer program that is executable by a processor to perform the method recited in claim 1.

16. A method comprising:

receiving an identifier from a client device;

receiving a request for configuration information from the client device;

identifying the requested configuration information associated with the client device based on the received identifier;

communicating the requested configuration information to the client device; and

communicating video data to the client device for display on a display device.

17. A method as recited in claim 16 further comprising:

receiving a request for configuration information associated with the client device from another server; and

communicating the requested configuration information to the other server.

18. A method as recited in claim 16 further comprising receiving modified configuration information from the client device.

19. A method as recited in claim 18 further comprising storing the modified configuration information.

20. A method as recited in claim 18 further comprising communicating the modified configuration information to the client device during subsequent requests for configuration information from the client device.

21. One or more computer-readable memories containing a computer program that is executable by a processor to perform the method recited in claim 16.

22. One or more computer-readable media having stored thereon a computer program that, when executed by one or more processors, causes the one or more processors to:

receive a request to perform a task from a user;

determine configuration information needed to perform the requested task;

request the needed configuration information from a configuration server;

receive the needed configuration information from the configuration server;

apply the needed configuration information;

receive video data from the configuration server; and

communicate the received video data to a display device.

23. One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 22 wherein the one or more processors further discard the needed configuration information after applying the needed configuration information.

24. One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 22 wherein the needed information is applied to a plurality of client devices.

25. One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 22 wherein the one or more processors further request the same configuration information in response to a subsequent request to perform the same task.

26. An apparatus comprising: ╱

a storage device containing an identifier associated with the apparatus;

a communication interface; and

a processor coupled to the storage device and the communication interface, wherein the processor is to communicate a request for configuration information and the identifier to a configuration server via the communication interface, wherein the processor is further to receive configuration information from a

configuration server via the communication interface, and wherein the processor is to receive broadcast video data via the communication interface.

27. An apparatus as recited in claim 26 wherein the processor is further to process the received video data for display on a display device.

28. An apparatus as recited in claim 26 further comprising an audio/video output coupled to the processor and configured to communicate the received video data to a display device coupled to the audio/video output.

29. An apparatus as recited in claim 26 further comprising a tuner to tune at least one channel associated with the broadcast video data.